SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT AND REPORTING

ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL JURISDICTION 2002-2005 EDUCATION PLANS

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This document is intended primarily for:
System and School Administrators
School Board Trustees
Alberta Learning Executive Team and Managers

And may be of interest to:
Teachers
Parents
Community members

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Alberta Learning analyzes school jurisdiction education plans annually to reinforce and inform the accountability relationships between the Ministry and school boards. This report documents the continuing implementation of an articulated planning model. Key insights based on this report include the following:

1. Education planning is a highly dynamic process for school boards; almost half effected substantive changes to their 2002-05 education plans, such as priority or goal changes.
2. Changes in jurisdiction education plans held some key implications for Alberta Learning's business plan, including calls for a review of how well the Ministry communicates and implements curriculum initiatives that support the diverse needs of students, and continued implementation of the equity components of the new funding framework.
3. Provincial priorities are receiving extensive treatment and action by school jurisdictions in the education plans. Coverage is approaching 100% and only minor growth is necessary to achieve full implementation.
4. Eighty-one percent of jurisdictions identified local priorities, indicating again the dynamic nature of education planning at the board level.
5. Similar to the treatment of provincial priorities, coverage of provincial goals and outcomes is approaching full implementation. Typically only one or two boards need to improve this aspect of their education plans.
6. The focus of Goal 1, High Quality Learning Opportunities, is stimulating AERR analysis, diversifying learning opportunities for students, supporting professional development linked to professional growth plans, and placing a focus on partnerships.
7. The focus of Goal 2, Excellence in Learner Achievement, is helping to: institutionalize analysis of provincial achievement test and diploma exam data, review priorities for improvement, and support delivery of alternative programs and counseling supports to better respond to student needs. However, target setting processes, as summarized in Table 7, is an area that would merit review with the objective of improving these processes.
8. Goal 3, Well Prepared Learners for Lifelong Learning, World of Work and Citizenship, demonstrated some overlap with Goals One and Two, but also supported a focus on facilitating students at key transition points in their school experience from ECS to grade one up to school-to-work/post secondary transitions. Within this context the importance of working closely with parents and providing support to students receives considerable attention.
9. Goal 4, Effective Working Relationship with Partners, reflected broad alliances with business, industry and community groups to generate stronger support for schools. A range of challenges in establishing and maintaining effective partnerships are identified.
10. Goal 5, Responsible and Responsive Jurisdiction, while optional for the 2002-05 education plans, seems to be a fundamental aspect underlying school jurisdiction education planning with a strong focus on community relations to stimulate strong public

support for education.

11. Three *major overlapping themes* were observed across several provincial goals. First, jurisdictions repeatedly emphasized the necessity of diversifying learning opportunities through programming flexibility and alternative delivery methods in order to broadly meet student needs. Secondly, while Goal 4 was specifically allocated to developing partnerships and joint initiatives, this theme was also evident in jurisdictions' treatment of Goals 1, 2 and 3. The third overarching theme focused on the importance of professional development for teachers and other staff. These universal themes of programming, professional development and partnerships point to critical areas that should receive further consideration within the Ministry's priority setting process.
12. Capital planning is typically driven by program and student needs often informed by community input.
13. Budget highlights and related funded initiatives planning was generally well represented in the education plans, but the area requiring the greatest improvement is planning for the FNMI initiative.

INTRODUCTION

Alberta Learning reads and summarizes school jurisdiction education plans as one way of being informed about key issues identified by school boards as affecting the K-12 education system, and to reinforce the accountability relationship between Ministry and school board planning. The report is part of a series of summary reports on school board planning or reporting that over time document the operation and evolution of the Alberta model of accountability for basic education. The primary audiences for this report are school and system based administrators, school board trustees, and Alberta Learning's Executive Team and managers.

METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

The methods used in analyzing school board education plans involve Alberta Learning staff creating a Summary and Review form for jurisdiction plans. This form is unique for each planning cycle and is designed to capture local planning contexts in relationship to the current *Guide for School Board Planning and Results Reporting*. Field Services staff read each education plan, highlighting key aspects in the Summary and Review Form. These forms are then reviewed and verified through meetings with superintendents by Field Services managers. The System Improvement and Reporting Division then completes a qualitative analysis of the verified Summary and Review Forms noting key patterns and insights for the planning process. These findings are summarized in this report that rolls up this information for the 62 operating school board 2002-2005 education plans.

Frequencies in this report represent either a percent of a predetermined total (e.g. percent of jurisdictions including a specific outcome or measure in their plans) or responses to open-ended questions. Open-ended response frequencies (e.g. see Table 4) represent input volunteered by jurisdiction staff in response to a general question as opposed to selecting items from a pre-designed list of possible responses. In these cases the n's and percentages reported should be interpreted as generally illustrative of the relative importance of the items and not reflective of a scientific survey of ranked importance of the item(s).

VISION, MISSION AND BELIEFS

Jurisdiction plans reflect provincial suggestions for addressing contextual content of education plans including: vision and mission statements, principles and beliefs, jurisdiction profile information and existing issues and trends. This alignment attests to the usefulness of these contextual structures for informing planning processes. As noted in the Table below, 44% of jurisdictions identified that review of the contextual information had resulted in substantive changes to their education plans, such as priority or goal changes, changes to administrative structures, or grade level reorganization; and were often motivated by turnover in trustees or administrative leadership. Labor actions were sometimes cited as limiting planning opportunities for plan reviews.

Changes in jurisdiction education plans held some key implications for Alberta Learning's business plan including calls for a review of curriculum development, design and supports needed to facilitate program implementation in the field, and continued implementation of the equity components of the new funding framework.

Table 1 – Percent Including Contextual Information	n (%)
Vision Statement	**60** (97%)
Mission Statement	**62** (100%)
Principles or Beliefs	**61** (98%)
Jurisdiction Profile	**62** (100%)
Issues and Trends	**62** (100%)
Substantive Change Influenced by the Above	**27** (44%)

JURISDICTION PROFILE, TRENDS AND PRIORITIES

Additional contextual information is presented in the jurisdiction profile, issues and trends, and priority areas for improvement sections of plans. Priority areas are a required component and the percentage of jurisdictions including each priority is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 – Priority Areas, Issues and Trends by Frequency	n (%)
Improving coordination of services for children	**62 (100%)**
Increasing high school completion rates	**61 (98%)**
Improving community satisfaction with education	**61 (98%)**
Improving learning through effective use of ICT	**60 (97%)**
Improving early literacy and numeracy	**59 (95%)**
Improving secondary student achievement in math	**58 (94%)**
Local priorities for improvement	**50 (81%)**

Jurisdictions were asked to comment on changes that have been made to measures or strategies to achieve progress on key provincial priorities.

Improving coordination of services for children: Jurisdictions believed that the SHIP partnership was effective in increasing the coordination of services for children. In order to improve what is being done for children, several jurisdictions were expanding connections with external agencies, or hiring specialists (speech language therapists, mental health liaison workers, or rehabilitation aides).

Increasing high school completion rates: Several of the jurisdictions commented that increasing high school completion rates was a strong focus with emphasis being placed on initiatives such as Outreach, work experience, RAP, technical preparation, mentoring, career fairs, career counseling, native liaisons, distance learning, green certificates, portfolio design, and the ease of transitions. In some jurisdictions, phone calls are made to those students leaving school before completion to identify some of their alternatives. Some jurisdictions are doing exit interviews with students who leave before completion and others are tracking students from grade nine in order to determine whether there are any factors that are associated with leaving school before completion. Others are increasing the number of CTS courses to enhance the relevance of education. It was suggested that the province create a summary of best practices for use in high school to increase completion levels and that information be gathered on best practices to use with online schools.

Improving community satisfaction with education: Although there was a high degree of compliance with this priority, few of the jurisdictions commented on changes to strategies or measures in their summaries. Comments were made indicating that it is a priority, but how

jurisdictions are going about achieving it was less clear. Jurisdictions that did provide some strategies indicate work was being done to increase communication with the community, teacher accountability, and the involvement of stakeholders. The primary method of analyzing satisfaction was noted as being surveys of parents and the public.

Improving learning through effective use of ICT: In order to improve learning through the use of information and communication technology, jurisdictions are hiring technicians, purchasing and upgrading equipment/software, developing online courses and tools, providing professional development and peer leaders to support teachers, and continuing to integrate technology into instruction and the curriculum. Although not the only measures, the primary ones mentioned were the ratio of students per piece of equipment and the number of technology workshops teachers have completed.

Improving early literacy: A variety of focused programs, such as Reading Academy, Reading Recovery, Read to Succeed, Animated Literacy, and the Program for Inclusion Now were used to focus on early literacy intervention. Teachers and lead teachers are being trained in best practices related to literacy and numeracy. Emphasis is being placed on children in early elementary and ECS, with one jurisdiction providing in-servicing to all ECS providers, including private ECS providers. Individual jurisdictions indicated that literacy screening is being done for pre-school age children to identify problems early, and that they would be providing full-day kindergarten. Only one jurisdiction mentioned a specific measure that would be used. They are going to look at the language arts scores of grade three students who had at some time received ELI and examine whether they were at acceptable levels.

Improving secondary student achievement in math: Through in-services, workshops, peer leaders, and collaboration, teachers are receiving professional development related to content, effective methods of teaching secondary math, and ways of assessing student knowledge. AISI funding is being used for secondary math projects. Focus was placed not only on secondary math, but on preparation as well, in order to enable students to begin high school with a solid foundation. Success will be measured based on scores achieved by students on common assessments that math teachers have developed as a group, surveys of math teachers about students' achievement, the number of teachers (teaching math) who have taken math professional development, and above average provincial secondary math scores.

Local priorities for improvement: Jurisdictions identified multiple additional priorities that were not directed by the province. Professional development in general was a priority, in addition to improving special education and the achievement of native students, and implementing anti-bullying strategies. Mentoring for teachers, potential administrators and students was seen as important, as were: French immersion, small rural schools, student transportation service, programs for talented/gifted students, IPP standardization, comprehensive counseling, evaluations of schools and principals, pre and post-testing, and increasing enrollment and attendance.

AISI effective practices: When asked to summarize some of the effective practices/programs that AISI had brought about, jurisdictions generally focused their responses on either specific programs or development and support for teachers. AISI funding often went towards programs related to early literacy intervention, reading recovery, or math intervention. Some jurisdictions used the funding to develop elementary science and reading kits, publish books on scholarships, focus on fine arts, career development, ESL (including ESL provision for colony schools), or a FM sound field system for students needing extra auditory support. Professional development

generally centered on assisting teachers with the literacy, math, and technology implementation.

How do you involve parents/public in your education planning and reporting? By far, the most common way that parents have input into planning and receive information on results is through school councils. Trustees in several jurisdictions meet with school councils at least once a year, however, one jurisdiction mentioned much more frequent contact, with trustees attending every school council meeting. Surveys are used to gather input from parents, the public, and sometimes staff and students. Many of these surveys are satisfaction surveys that give jurisdictions suggestions on what needs to be improved to increase levels of satisfaction.

PLANNING FOR PROVINCIAL GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Table 3 illustrates a high percentage of jurisdictions complying with provincial planning requirements and compares the compliance rate with education plans for 2000-03 when the current goals and outcomes could first be incorporated into school board education plans and for 2001-04. Between ninety-five and one hundred percent (95-100%) of jurisdictions included the specific required provincial outcomes in their 2002-05 education plans. A slightly lower percentage of jurisdictions (90%) included the required measures, targets and trend data for Goal 2, indicating that a small number of districts (six) may require additional support in developing appropriate performance measures and tracking the data over time. Finally, 69% of jurisdictions planned for Goal 5 and the related outcome. However, it should be stressed that inclusion of goal 5 was optional for 2002-05.

Table 3 – Planning for Provincial Goals and Outcomes

Goals:	2002-05 plan N=62	2001-04 plan N=62	2000-03 plan* N=48
Goal 1: High Quality Learning Opportunities			
• Learning system is responsive	98%	89%	90%
• Learning system is flexible	98%	100%	100%
• Learning system is accessible	98%	100%	81%
• Financial need not a barrier	95%	82%	67%
• Affordable	97%	84%	73%
Goal 2: Excellence in Learner Achievement			
• Learners demonstrate high standards	100%	98%	98%
• Learners complete programs	98%	95%	83%
• Plan includes the required measures, targets and trend data	90%	70%	n/a
Goal 3: Well Prepared Learners			
• Children start ready to learn	95%	90%	88%
• Albertans are able to learn continuously	98%	95%	83%
• Learners are well prepared for work	98%	97%	71%
• Learners are well prepared for citizenship	97%	94%	92%
Goal 4: Effective Working Relationships with Partners			
• Effective partnerships	100%	97%	98%
• Joint initiatives	95%	95%	98%
Goal 5 (Optional): Responsible and Responsive Jurisdiction			
• Jurisdiction demonstrates leadership and continuous improvement	69%	n/a	n/a

* In the 2000-03 Education Plans, 48 school boards exercised the option of adopting Alberta Learning's new goal structure.

GOAL 1 – HIGH QUALITY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Field Services managers asked superintendents, ***"What key conclusions have you made from the previous AERR that stimulated changes to plans, strategies or measures for achieving the Goal One outcomes?"*** The major themes resulting from jurisdictions answering this question are presented in Table 4. In general, jurisdictions' information indicates that the AERR analysis drives formulation of the next education plans.

Table 4 – Responses to "What Key Conclusions..." (Goal 1)

	n (%)
Goal Outcomes: The Learning System is Responsive / Flexible / Accessible	
• Increasing program choice and alternative delivery methods	**27** (44%)
• Revisiting education plans at both school and jurisdiction levels	**20** (32%)
• Offering relevant professional/leadership development to teachers and administrators	**14** (23%)
• Using results of (satisfaction) surveys to "red flag" items for planning	**10** (16%)
• Establishing/enhancing partnerships	**10** (16%)
• Using student achievement as a basis ("key determinant") for identifying future priorities and targets in education plans	**8** (13%)
Goal Outcomes: Financial Need is not a Barrier / The Learning System is Affordable	
• Monitoring / waiving school fees	**20** (32%)
• Other financial measures	**8** (13%)

Key Conclusions from Previous AERR

***Re-formulation of education plans*:** Revisiting their planning based on previous AERRs was emphasized by 32% of jurisdictions. They strived to make the plans more responsive, flexible, effective and relevant. One of the focus areas was ensuring congruence/alignment between school and jurisdiction plans and between the latter and the Alberta Learning business plan. Ongoing revisions of performance measures and strategies were prompted by the need to address the areas that required improvement according to AERRs or to explore new avenues of meeting the outcomes.

***AERR data informing education plans*:** Thirteen percent (13%) of jurisdictions stressed the importance of using student achievement data (such as the results of PATs and Diploma Exams as well as high school completion data) for identifying future priorities and targets in their education plans. Another 16% mentioned using results of satisfaction surveys for addressing priority areas for improvement. In addition, AISI results became an important feature in reporting and planning in some jurisdictions.

Diversifying learning opportunities through programming and teaching practices: Almost half of jurisdictions (44%) recognized the importance of strengthening areas such as (alternative) programming and teaching methods in order to meet Goal 1 outcomes. Specific program areas included:

- on-line coursework and distance education (when "face to face" teaching is not possible);
- early intervention services;
- special needs (inclusive and segregated programs), IOP and ESL;
- focusing on non-readers and literacy (e.g., ELI and "read to succeed" programs for grades 1 - 12);
- outreach school programs;
- home based learning programs;
- summer school programming; year round schooling;

- services and programming for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students;
- CTS, Work Experience and RAP.

Besides instructional programs and methods, jurisdictions directed their attention at general school environment (i.e., promoting safe and caring schools, offering behavior supports and character development programs, anti-drug programs, family-school liaison programs, etc.). Some jurisdictions focused on developing partnerships among schools to make programs available to all students in need.

***Focusing on professional development*:** Jurisdictions recognized the importance of professional development, which, together with diversified partnerships, is an important contributor to program offerings and services to students. According to jurisdictions, the direction of teacher PD depends on AERR findings and schools' priorities or goals. Hence, there is a need for staff to have professional growth plans and access to flexible PD opportunities through a variety of means/sources (e.g., through AISI, university programs, in-services and so on).

***Focusing on partnerships*:** Ten percent (10%) of jurisdictions stressed continuing work on partnerships ranging from engaging parents in the planning process through school councils to reaching to broader communities (e.g., Children's Services Authorities, community agencies, creating community SHIP consultation teams, partnering with local media, etc.) Jurisdictions also acknowledged the necessity of giving back to the communities, whose learning needs, in turn, should be met through an adequate choice of programs (i.e., a "two-way" partnership).

GOAL 2 - EXCELLENCE IN LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT

With regard to Goal Two, Field Services managers asked superintendents the following questions:

(1) "What key conclusions have you made from the previous AERR that stimulated changes to plans, strategies or measures for achieving the Goal Two outcomes?"

(2) "What strategies are you using to increase completion rates?" and

(3) "How do you set targets for Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs) and Diploma Exams (DEs)?"

Extensive jurisdictional comments were categorized according to these questions in Tables 5 through 7.

Key Conclusions Resulting from Previous AERR

Focus on student achievement: As illustrated in Table 5, a third (35%) of jurisdictions acknowledged the high priority of the review, analysis and interpretation of student achievement data for the planning process (i.e., for re-strategizing to "assist and support student achievement," setting benchmarks /targets, input for course planning and so on). In addition, jurisdictions underscored analysis of participation rates in both PATs and DEs, as this data has a "bearing on students demonstrating high standards."

Table 5 – Responses to **"What key conclusions ..."***(Goal 2)*

	n (%)
• Focusing on **student achievement** and participation in PATs and DEs	**22** (35%)
• Setting (new/continuing) key priority areas	**15** (24%)
• Alternative programming and instructional approaches	**13** (21%)
• Attention to/increasing PD opportunities for teachers	**11** (17%)

Setting priority areas for improvement: A quarter of jurisdictions (24%) emphasized the importance of identifying key issues/priority areas as a base for the action plans targeting improvement. The priorities and resultant strategies, targets, projects and programs, included numeracy, early literacy, special needs, secondary math, recruitment of teachers and so on. For example, an action plan focusing on the frequently mentioned priority - secondary math - involved the following strategies. The district had set up its own standards in secondary math and planned a math review and examination of curriculum standards for grades 1-10. Changes were made to the scheduling to include daily math instruction, as well as an increase in the amount of time spent on math. Teachers were offered professional development.

Focus on alternative programming and teachers' PD: Twenty one percent (21%) of jurisdictions acknowledged the importance of programming in areas such as full-time kindergarten, culturally relevant/sensitive programs (e.g., directed at First Nations students), technology and literacy. Congruent with this theme, 17% of districts emphasized "adding relevant strategies" to developing "professional learning communities" among teachers.

Strategies to Increase (High School) Completion Rates

Jurisdictions' answers to the question: ***"What strategies are you using to increase completion rates?"*** are summarized in Table 6.

Offering alternative programs/delivery models: The majority of jurisdictions (68%) stressed the importance of developing "optimal learning environments" for students through designing local courses to meet identified needs and placing students in programs in which they are most likely to succeed. High school programs need to become more "seamless" by offering alternatives for students who are not able to succeed in regular programs as well as helping students develop their careers prior to leaving high school. The relevant programs for Goal 2 are somewhat similar to the already mentioned programming areas for Goal 1, and included IPP, IOP, virtual/distance learning, outreach, off-campus, schools for returning grade 12s, Store Front Schools, Tech Prep, Work Experience, RAP, Green Certificate and so on. In addition, five districts (8%) called attention to the need of focusing Native education programs on high school completion.

Table 6 – Responses to **"What strategies are you using to increase completion rates?"**

	n (%)
• Offering relevant programs/courses/alternative delivery models	**42** (68%)
• Offering academic and career counseling/working with students and families	**22** (35%)
• Developing (interagency/community/inter-jurisdictional) partnerships	**19** (31%)
• Planning/data collection targeting *specifically* high school completion: - Setting goals / developing strategies for high school completion - Introducing relevant performance measures - Student follow-up/tracking	**13** (21%)
• Data analysis/studying high school completion rates to determine trends, including: - using Alberta Learning resources such as Removing Barriers to High School Completion, FNMI report and completion rate data - continuing to work with Alberta Learning to investigate low high school completion rates and implement recommendations	**8** (13%)
• Targeting improvements specifically for Aboriginal students	**5** (8%)

Offering counseling services to students and their families: A third (35%) of jurisdictions emphasized diversified work with students and their families as a way to ensure students "feel that they belong" and "do not fall between the cracks." The examples of this type of work are as follows:

- identifying and targeting students who are "at risk" for non-completion;
- liaison workers, social workers, counselors and administrators counseling students and families to increase attendance;
- identifying student needs/wants regarding the provision of meaningful complementary courses;
- use of a Standardized Exit Protocol, including an exit interview and the development of an action plan by the student;
- reaching beyond the high school by offering information to students on post-secondary education (through the web or "transition booklets" for students attending post-secondary institutions); and
- recognizing staff and students' excellence.

According to jurisdictions, availability of relevant counseling is important at all schooling stages, i.e., both for high school students and those just entering high school, as well as at the elementary school level (i.e., the issue of counseling consistency).

Developing (interagency/community/inter-jurisdictional) partnerships: Almost a third (31%) of jurisdictions mentioned developing partnerships as a strategy for increasing high school completion rates. Specific examples included joint programs with colleges, providing students with career counseling through partnering with organizations such as Economic Development Association and Human Resources, and developing partnerships with other jurisdictions.

Data analysis targeting specifically high school completion rates: Eight jurisdictions (13%) considered it important to study trends in high school completion rates in order to develop strategies for their improvement. They recognized the importance of cooperation with Alberta Learning both for utilizing the ministry's data and documents (such as Removing Barriers to High School Completion and completion rate data) and generating recommendations.

Planning/data collection targeting specifically high school completion: Twenty one percent (21%) of jurisdictions stressed the need of targeting *specifically* high school completion in planning and reporting, including making program completion rate a priority in itself or a special goal in schools' 3 year plans and developing strategies for increasing high school completion rates. Jurisdictions draw attention to introducing relevant performance measures (such as % of students who complete within 5 years of entering grade 9/10, participation rates in 30 level courses, and student satisfaction) as well as implementing an effective system of tracking students leaving school.

Summary of the strategies to increase high school completion rates: To sum-up, the strategies outlined in Table 6 can be presented as elements of the following "action system:"

- Prevention – to improve academic achievement
- Intervention – to enhance personal, social/family and community conditions
- Transition strategies – to improve career preparation, job training and relevance of education.

Setting Targets for Provincial Achievement Tests and Diploma Exams

Provincial and local targets: Setting targets for provincial achievement tests and diploma exams is a required multi-level procedure that relates provincial achievement test and diploma exam results to provincial results, provincial standards and local results. In setting targets, 40% of jurisdictions referenced provincial standards, a third of jurisdictions (32%) used their historical or trend data (i.e., a 5-year average), and 17% reported setting targets on local contexts for realistic/reachable projections. The categories in Table 7 are not mutually exclusive, suggesting that some, but clearly not all, jurisdictions may be using multiple reference points.

Table 7 – Responses to "How Are Targets for PATs and DEs Being Set?"	n (%)
• Provincial standards/data (averages) are a benchmark	**25** (40%)*
• Basing targets on previous results/trend/historical/baseline data	**21** (32%)*
• Individual schools set achievement targets based on their local contexts	**10** (17%)*
• Discussing results/setting targets in a team effort / consultative process	**8** (13%)*
• Introducing incremental targets (if "there is still room for improvement")	**8** (13%)*

* These categories are not mutually exclusive, but may overlap.

Discussing results/setting targets in a team effort/consultative process: Thirteen percent (13%) of jurisdictions accentuated the *collegial approach* to the target setting at different administrative levels. At the school level, teams of teachers analyze results and develop action plans to address the results and, as one system administrator commented, "The next step is to look at these to see what we can do as a system -- what worked and what did not." District-level targets are set up in collaboration with school principals and trustees. As mentioned earlier, targets are based on examining trend data and standards, however, target setting processes, as summarized in Table 7, is an area that would merit review with the objective of improving these processes.

Introducing incremental targets: Thirteen percent (13%) of jurisdictions strived to achieve results (set targets) that are "equal or superior to the preceding year." According to these jurisdictions, PAT and DE results should grow from year to year.

Additional Conclusions for Goal Two

On a number of occasions jurisdictions emphasized similar points while answering the above-mentioned three questions posed by Field Services managers for the Goal Two. The important comments that "run across" the Field Services questions/topics are summarized below.

1. ***Promoting necessary resources:*** Eleven percent (11%) of jurisdictions highlighted a critical role of sufficient and flexible teacher/classroom resources, such as technology tools and test materials, "to enable improved classroom conditions that allow for optimal teaching and learning."

2. ***Tracking/monitoring student progress:*** Ten percent (10%) of jurisdictions noted that using ATRAC analysis as well as other assessment tools is beneficial to instructional planning and monitoring high school achievement results.

3. ***Professional development related to the ministry activities:*** Six percent (6%) of jurisdictions explicitly accentuated the utility of their teachers participating in marking provincial exams, field testing and Alberta Learning curriculum development.

GOAL 3 – WELL PREPARED LEARNERS FOR LIFELONG LEARNING, WORLD OF WORK AND CITIZENSHIP

As a result of answering the question, ***"What key conclusions have you made from the previous AERR that stimulated changes to plans, strategies or measures for achieving the Goal Three outcomes?"***- jurisdictions identified a number of closely interrelated priorities/needs (Table 8).

Key Conclusions from Previous AERR

Congruent with the Goal Two outcomes, jurisdictions focused on *areas of student transition* at different stages of learning, starting from entering elementary school and up to school-to-work/post secondary transition. The priority areas summarized in Table 8 represent jurisdictions' strategies "to make the transition for students as smooth and fruitful as possible" as well as prepare them for lifelong learning. (For example, jurisdictions' concerns about school-to-work transition can translate into launching different partnerships, programs and work with students/parents).

Table 8 – Responses to "What key conclusions..." (Goal 3)	**n (%)**
• Developing/maintaining/expanding diversified programs	**42** (68%)
• Establishing relevant measures (mostly satisfaction) as a base for strategies	**17** (27%)
• Developing/maintaining/expanding partnerships	**16** (26%)
• Working with students	**14** (23%)
• Assessing/tracking student data at different schooling stages	**12** (19%)
• Utilizing AISI in different projects	**11** (18%)
• Working with parents/getting parents involved	**10** (16%)
• Resource availability and development (mostly with emphasis on technology)	**10** (16%)
• Providing support for staff	**7** (11%)

Developing/maintaining/expanding programs/projects relevant to the goal's outcomes: In a pattern similar to their conclusions for Goals One and Two, the majority of jurisdictions (68%) accentuated the importance of offering diversified programs covering various aspects of student learning and other needs. The assortment of programs mentioned by jurisdictions for Goal Three bear similarities to Goals One and Two. Programs targeting students' readiness for school and early success included speech language services, Early/Family Literacy, Head Start and Early Education programs. Programs directed at mitigating students' transition to work or post-secondary education included off-campus programs, such as RAP, work experience and Green Certificate. A broad assortment of programs cited by jurisdictions can be summarized into the following categories:

- Academic programs: ELI, IOP, ICT, prep programs for high school, Early Literacy, providing one-on-one literacy and math intervention programs, etc.
- Career/work experience: RAP, CTS courses, work experience, work study, work with Human Resource and Employment, Career Fairs, Careers the Next Generation, Tech Prep, incorporating business awareness skills into the 7-12 curriculum.
- Community/citizenship: volunteer service, building in second languages and seeking international students and teacher exchanges to encourage greater cultural understanding, student and staff recognition, social justice activities for students.
- Behavioral/character development: character education, programs for students with

behavioral disorders, providing a Safe and Caring environment, teaching of pro-social skills to students, anti-bullying, etc.

Defining priorities/strategies based on the relevant measures: 27% of jurisdictions draw attention to the utility of performance measures (mostly measures of satisfaction) as a means of evaluating outcomes and "drivers" for the education plan's priorities and strategies. For example, if (student/parent) satisfaction results regarding career planning were lower than the targets, this became a focus for the coming year. Specific examples of satisfaction measures were as follows:

- % of parent satisfaction with school preparing students for work and post-secondary education;
- % of students who agree they were well prepared for work or further education;
- % of students who are employed after grade 12 or enter post-secondary.

Developing/maintaining/expanding partnerships: Similar to the conclusions for Goals One and Two, a relatively high proportion of jurisdictions (26%) stressed the need for the development of partnerships to achieve the Goal Three outcomes. The examples of partnerships according to the Goal Three outcomes included:

- Children's readiness for school: working with communities and outside agencies such as health authorities to identify children with needs (for early intervention) and developing partnerships with pre-schools.
- Albertans are able to learn continuously / Student preparedness for work: establishing business/community links and partnerships, such as partnerships to increase RAP and Green Certificate placements and encourage students to complete high school and to view existing job opportunities (e.g., with AMOCO).

Working with/providing support to parents: 16% of jurisdictions mentioned the need to get parents engaged in supporting student learning. The relevant strategies included reporting to parents frequently (e.g., once per month), involving them in the Take Your Kids to Work program, literacy activities such as reading with children and monitoring student attendance. Jurisdictions mentioned introducing home visits and issuing school newsletters with an educational component for parents dealing with topics, such as literacy and nutrition. Jurisdictions stressed the need to assist students and parents in attaining a broad perspective on potential career options by providing them with information on "the various ways students can meet their career goals within the school system" and encouraging them to look at a variety of alternatives for post-secondary education.

Working with/providing support to students: 23% of jurisdictions emphasized the need for student support, including various forms of counseling and coordinating work experience, implementing student (employability) portfolios, encouraging access to scholarships (e.g., Rutherford, Board scholarships, etc.) and ensuring students have access to the most current information on programs, course requirements and career options.

Providing support for staff : 11% of jurisdictions mentioned the importance of putting in place different supports for teachers and other staff, including assistance with new curriculum (e.g., new Health/CALM curriculum), different forms of professional development (e.g., training teachers and teaching assistants in special education and behavioral intervention) and achievement recognition.

Assessment/tracking student data at different schooling stages: 19 % of jurisdictions placed emphasis on the need to set up processes of student data tracking and assessment, such as tracking data on ELI results, early entry testing programs, early identification of students requiring PUF programming, developing student portfolios (as a monitoring and self-evaluation tool), assessing data on students who leave the district to complete high school and tracking students leaving high school.

Placing emphasis on resource availability and development: 16% of jurisdictions focused on making sure that they are adequately "resourced" for advanced teaching programs and methods. They mostly emphasized "integrating education technology" and "supporting staff and students use of technology."

Utilizing AISI: Jurisdictions comments (18% of districts) attested to diversified uses of AISI for different purposes, mostly for getting children ready to learn (projects such as setting up full day kindergarten programming, addressing early entry, Early Literacy, Balanced Literacy project, Early Reading Intervention Program and so on). In addition, jurisdictions mentioned utilizing AISI for providing career counseling and high school prep projects.

Overall, the high degree of overlap between Goals 2 and 3 supports the amalgamation of the goals in Alberta Learning's 2003-06 Business Plan.

GOAL 4 – EFFECTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARTNERS

In addition to indicating ***the key conclusions reached since the last AERR that stimulated changes to plans, strategies or measures for achieving the Goal Four outcomes***, the jurisdictions discussed goal four more broadly. Partners provided monetary support in some jurisdictions, and non-monetary forms of assistance in others. Partnerships enhanced the programs that jurisdictions offered and increased levels of student engagement. One jurisdiction indicated that partnerships were important because they "extend[ed] the 'learning' reach into the community." Good communication was mentioned as being the key to good partnering, and it was mentioned that cooperation among the highest levels of organizations was necessary for partnerships to be effective.

Partnerships: Partnerships with business and industry were common, with 23% of the jurisdictions mentioning them. Businesses partnered with schools to provide opportunities for work experience students, and support stay-in-school initiatives. One jurisdiction mentioned that the local businesses' requirement that workers need high school diplomas provided particular motivation for students to continue with their schooling. A couple of jurisdictions indicated that they found it challenging to form business partnerships, with one of them citing that finding French partners was particularly challenging.

Equally as important according to the frequency with which they were mentioned, are partnerships with community organizations. Twenty-three percent (23%) of jurisdictions talked about these types of partners, with several mentioning work with the Lions Club, RCMP, YMCA or YWCA, and FCSS. Individual jurisdictions also discussed having partnerships with AADAC, the Centre for Family Literacy, Society for Pregnant Teens, Council for Life Long Learning,

Kiwanis Club, Chamber of Commerce, as well as local libraries and agricultural societies.

In addition to these types of partnerships, jurisdictions also discussed being partners with parents, local universities and colleges (specifically for teacher and teaching assistant practicum placements or for the delivery of CTS modules), school staff, school councils (including regional councils and the council of councils), the public/community, other school jurisdictions (with several mentioning partnering with other coterminous jurisdictions), churches/parishes/those who share the Catholic vision, municipal councils, MLAs, and students.

Level of success with partnerships: Ten percent (10%) of the jurisdictions indicated that they have already been successful with their partnerships, as measured by the reduced distance between targets and results, as well as the marked increase in satisfaction with the coordination of services. Several jurisdictions commented on the success and effectiveness of SHIP in particular. However, some challenges were expressed as well. Of the 19% of jurisdictions that discussed challenges, concern was expressed about the impact of funding cuts to their partners on current partnerships, the amount of bureaucracy and administration required for collaboration, the limited resources and high costs of collaborating, and the extensive amount of time involved in partnering. Individual jurisdictions indicated difficulties gauging community satisfaction, frustration about the amount of money that goes to administration rather than direct programming, concerns about whether Children's Services might pull funding, and continuing concerns about the coordination of services for children. One jurisdiction has come to the realization that partnerships are more difficult in some communities, necessitating the creation of less formal partnerships. Suggestions were made by individual jurisdictions that school boards get responsibility to look after children's needs and that the creation of one regional health authority for francophone schools would improve things for them.

GOAL 5 – RESPONSIBLE AND RESPONSIVE JURISDICTION

(OPTIONAL FOR 2002-05)

Although Goal Five was an optional one in the 2002-05 Education Plans, many of the jurisdictions had already begun planning for this goal. Through their field services contacts, superintendents were asked ***"what strategies and measures will you use in planning for this new goal?"***

Strategies and Measures

Jurisdictions reported several broad strategies, as indicated in Table 9.

Table 9 – Goal Five Strategies	**n (%)**
• Collaboration/Keeping Stakeholders Informed	**21** (34%)
• Professional Development	**12** (19%)
• Budget/Resource Allocation	**7** (11%)

Collaboration/Keeping stakeholders informed: The most frequently mentioned strategy that jurisdictions used in planning to be responsive and responsible is the way in which they collaborate with stakeholders and keep them informed. Thirty-four percent (34%) of jurisdictions mentioned this strategy in one form or another. Collaboration occurred when parents, principals, teachers, teaching assistants, school councils, students, and trustees were

involved in making decisions appropriate for them, and when board members made an effort to be a part of school meetings, functions, and activities. Nineteen percent (19%) of jurisdictions discussed collaboration as a strategy for this goal. Another 19% discussed their strategies for keeping their stakeholders informed, with easy access to satisfaction survey results, newsletters, education plans, AERRs, budgets, provincial achievement test results, and, in general, up to date information.

Professional Development: A second very common strategy among the jurisdictions was professional development (mentioned by 19% of jurisdictions), most frequently the development of leadership skills. While leadership development was indicated as being a strategy that could be used by new, or in some cases, existing administrators, a few jurisdictions included development of these skills in potential or prospective administrators. In addition to leadership skills, mentoring programs for first and second year teachers, as well as administrators, and yearly orientation sessions for all new employees (teachers, principals, and administrators) were mentioned.

Budget/Resource Allocation: Another group of jurisdictions (11%) had strategies that were related to budgets and resource allocation. A couple of these jurisdictions discussed having the strategy that they would work to ensure that they received the maximum amount of funding possible per student. Other strategies mentioned were to:

- have a resource allocation committee to make decisions about expenditures
- continue with balanced department and school budgets
- review additional revenue sources
- maximize resources for student instruction
- ensure schools are equitably funded
- pool instructional resources
- modify the student health funding model
- balance central versus site-based budgeting
- align the budget with the education plan
- establish sponsors
- implementation of comprehensive financial tracking
- regularly review school budgets
- maximize resources through SMART objectives and budget initiatives

Technology: Technology was mentioned by several jurisdictions as being a resource in the process of being responsive and responsible. In addition to the jurisdictions discussing the use of the internet to communicate with stakeholders, several jurisdictions mentioned other ways technology can play a role in achieving this goal. These jurisdictions discussed software and technical systems that could manage student records, human resources, finances, communication, and bus routing. In addition individual jurisdictions talked about performing technology audits in all schools, a system where schools could access their budget information online, and a system of "paperless resumes."

Performance Measures: The foremost measure that jurisdictions will be using to determine their success at being "responsive and responsible" is the satisfaction of their stakeholders (primarily of the parents, staff, and the public). Jurisdictions indicated that they would measure satisfaction with the leadership of the jurisdiction, the processes and procedures used to make improvements, and the actual improvements that were made. In addition, individual jurisdictions were going to measure satisfaction with the jurisdiction's responsiveness to the community, the effectiveness of their communication, the partnership between school and parents, the way

money is allocated, and the percentage of staff who were satisfied that the Assessment for Learning has improved learning.

CAPITAL PLANNING

Jurisdictions demonstrated a high level of compliance with regards to the highlights of their capital planning. This is illustrated in Table 10. For each of the requirements related to capital planning, just over ninety percent of the jurisdictions complied.

Table 10 - Highlights of Capital Planning

	Reflected in ed. Plans (% of jurisdictions)
• inclusion of 3yr Capital Plan and 10yr Facilities Plan	92%
• consistency of highlights with full capital plan	92%

Highlights

In answering the question ***"how does your capital plan highlight the major capital projects and their related support for educational purposes and students?,"*** jurisdictions focused their responses in several broad areas:

Focus of Plans: A small number of jurisdictions indicated where their main focus was in the creation of their capital plans. Five jurisdictions indicated that programming needs drove their plans, three indicated that they were based on what the students needed to learn, and another three indicated that the needs of the surrounding community drove their plans. One jurisdiction indicated that their plans centered around the long term needs facing the jurisdiction and one indicated that their plans were economically driven.

Renovations, upgrading, modernization and maintenance: Thirty-two percent (32%) of the jurisdictions provided comments relating to this area. The most common area that they felt needed this type of work done was in lab space for options (19%). Many of these jurisdictions specifically mentioned needing work done on CTS labs, and individual jurisdictions mentioned improvement needs for computer labs and language facilities or the need for library or gym space.

RELATED FUNDED INITIATIVES AND BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

While jurisdiction compliance remained high with regards to the inclusion of budget highlights, the inclusion of strategies for the related funded initiatives varied between each of the initiatives. A fairly high level of compliance was found for the inclusion of strategies related to ELI, students with special needs, AISI, technology, and the Student Health Initiative. Lower numbers of jurisdictions provided strategies for ESL, and only approximately half of the jurisdictions identified strategies for First Nation, Métis and Inuit programs. Compliance levels are indicated in Table 11. Likely the lower frequency of strategies for ESL and First Nation, Métis and Inuit programs result from the fact that some jurisdictions stated that they had very few of these types of students.

Table 11 - Inclusion of Strategies Related to Funded Initiatives and Budget Highlights

	Reflected in ed. plans (% of jurisdictions)
Related Funded Initiatives	
• ELI	95%
• Students with special needs	97%
• Student Health Initiative	90%
• ESL	82%
• AISI	98%
• Technology	97%
• First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Programs	53%
Budget Highlights	
• Review clarity and isolate key implications	95%

RELATED FUNDED INITIATIVES

Jurisdictions were asked ***"do you have any comments or suggestions, in developing your strategies for these initiatives?"*** Their responses were categorized according to the specific initiatives they were referring to, and are summarized below.

ELI: Thirty-five percent (35%) of the jurisdictions commented on ELI, and based on their responses, it continues to be a successful program. Several jurisdictions explicitly indicated that they believed the initiative should continue or be expanded and a few others went so far as to say they believed it was an essential initiative. Some of jurisdictions that commented on this initiative discussed how they were allocating their funds. Specific programs mentioned included "Early Reading Intervention," "Reading Recovery," and the "Animated Literacy Program." Other jurisdictions used their funding for pull-out programs, teaching assistant time, resources, a part-time coordinator to monitor ELI programs, or for teachers to work with children who require extra support. One jurisdiction indicated that they encouraged professional development to improve their ability to meet student needs in this area.

Students with special needs: Thirty-seven percent (37%) of the jurisdictions provided specific comments on their perspectives on the programming they are doing with special needs students. Over half of those who provided comments identified some of the approaches they are currently using to enhance special needs programming. Professional development for all staff was mentioned most frequently, but individual jurisdictions also mentioned work with outside agencies, expansion of the special needs program in high school, expansion of the early entry program for high school students, support for kindergarten students with mild or moderate special needs, increased assessments to identify special needs, resource people in the schools, development of a behaviour support group, hiring pedagogical consultants to identify students with special needs and support programs for them, monitoring IPPs centrally, and implementing guidelines that focus on the needs of gifted students. Approximately ¼ of the jurisdictions responding to this section voiced concerns including: funding sufficiency, the cost of assessments, having more special needs students than the funding profile allows for, the need to spend more on special education programming than they are granted, lack of services for special needs students in low population areas, and lack of availability of services in French. However, several jurisdictions discussed the value of special needs funding. They mentioned that the extra funds really do make a difference. Jurisdictions indicated that special education reviews showed good results.

Student Health Initiative: As with the other initiatives, approximately one-third of the jurisdictions commented on the Student Health Initiative. The most frequent type of comment related to collaboration and the partnerships they were working within to coordinate and improve services. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of the jurisdictions that made comments on this initiative referred to partnerships and collaboration. One jurisdiction mentioned working with eight health authorities alone. While several jurisdictions indicated that their partnerships where excellent, one jurisdiction mentioned that some were more successful than others. Several other areas of concern were also identified: stable funding, the need for cost-benefit studies to help ensure efficiency, the shortage of specialists (such as Speech Language Pathologists and Occupational Therapists), the amount of administrative support required, and the importance of these services being available in French.

Despite the concerns, several jurisdictions indicated that the initiative has been successful in meeting the needs of students and their families, and some indicated that the funds were useful in supplementing other initiatives, such as the native education program. Some of the jurisdictions still had plans to enhance what they were doing. Individual jurisdictions mentioned the need to establish programming for students with emotional difficulties, the possible appointment of a coordinator, and the need to create SHIP consultation teams in each community.

ESL: A large number of the respondents (38% of the jurisdictions commenting on ESL) targeted at least a portion of their funds towards Hutterite and Mennonite Colony schools. A couple of the jurisdictions indicated that extending ESL funding for pre-school and kindergarten children would be useful, particularly for children in Hutterite and Mennonite communities. Few jurisdictions spoke of their successes with ESL, with the exception of one that stated that almost all ESL students were currently at grade level. In order to enhance ESL programming, one jurisdiction was considering moving their ESL students to a year-round school, anticipating results will be better in this setting.

AISI: Forty percent (40%) of the jurisdictions made comments on AISI. Although these projects tend to vary from school to school, projects included initiatives focusing on increasing achievement of all students (including special needs students), attendance, literacy, completion rates, proficiency in math and reading, the number of students in music, and decreasing class size.

Several of the jurisdictions reported on the challenges they foresee. Individual jurisdictions commented that they need to reduce the number of projects, realign division and provincial priorities, that coordination needs to be both jurisdiction and school-based, and that changes to their capital space and technology are required. Thirty-two percent (32%) of the jurisdictions commenting on this particular initiative indicated that AISI or the process with which it's handled is excellent, successful, and well received.

Technology: Thirty-seven percent (37%) of jurisdictions provided some insight into their experiences with technology. Jurisdictions discussed building technology gradually into teachers' plans in core and optional courses. Some jurisdictions used lead teachers to help their peers integrate technology and others hired specialists or consultants to help their staff with the integration. Furthermore, professional development was mentioned by jurisdictions as a means of accomplishing the integration, although the specifics were not discussed. Several jurisdictions expressed their concerns that the current funding does not cover the costs associated with implementing technical plans, maintaining technology, "evergreening," and professional development. Of all of the initiatives discussed, the jurisdictions saw the need for additional

funds to be particularly strong with relation to technology. Not all jurisdictions have complete plans. In fact, based on their comments they appear to be at varying stages, with the commonality being that they are all on the path towards enhancing the integration of technology.

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Programs: Jurisdictions were in various stages of projects and planning for Aboriginal students. One jurisdiction wanted to learn more about these types of programs, whereas others were reviewing or implementing the findings from their reviews of existing programs. Native liaison workers were mentioned multiple times, and were generally described as being a positive way to link school and home. Jurisdictions discussed many different types of programs including: early intervention, mentorship and visits by elders, native language and cultural instruction, family nutrition kits, culturally sensitive software, and new Aboriginal schools, to list just a few. A couple of jurisdictions mentioned that parental involvement was a challenge for them. Other challenges that were mentioned by individual jurisdictions were that Aboriginal students were very spread out among schools. The importance of corporate partners was also highlighted. Identification and tracking of native students was mentioned by a couple of jurisdictions as being a sensitive issue, while another suggested that Alberta Learning could help jurisdictions to track achievement by creating reports from code 330.

Although the jurisdictions identified some challenges, they also identified some successes. Graduation rates appeared to be a key measure of success for two jurisdictions. One of them attributed the number of Aboriginal students that they have recently graduated to the native education project, which starts early, and to the work of the liaison workers.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Jurisdictions were asked ***how their budgets communicate to the public the key challenges involved in allocating dollars to meet student needs.*** Jurisdictions most frequently mentioned distribution of budget information to school councils, at board meetings, on their websites, and through the media, namely newspapers. Newsletters, quarterly bulletins, and annual reports were also mentioned as methods of dissemination.

Many of the jurisdictions (42%) focused on the components that were part of the information they distributed. Charts and graphs were seen by many as an easy method of conveying information. Several jurisdictions indicated that they presented a section with highlights or a summary of key information and several others mentioned the inclusion of detailed or comprehensive information. A couple of jurisdictions said they included data on spending per student.

Several of the jurisdictions mentioned some of the specific challenges they are facing. A few jurisdictions mentioned that they are running a deficit, although a couple of them said that it would be covered by reserves or surplus. Two suggestions were made for future education plans. One jurisdiction indicated that clarity would be enhanced if reserves were referred to, so that the budget could be presented as balanced, and one offered the suggestion that the address of the jurisdictions' website be included with the Ed. Plan.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

Outstanding Issues After the rest of the plan had been discussed, field services personnel asked whether there were any outstanding issues that the jurisdiction wished to be highlighted. The responses were quite varied, but the main areas of concern were, in order of frequency:

1. Funding level and distribution (63%)
2. Effective communication and information sharing (23%)
3. Staffing issues, especially high proportions at the top of the grid or ability to access specialized staff (16%).

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report documents the continuing maturation and implementation of the planning component of the Alberta accountability model for basic education. The report synthesized key themes and insights gleaned from reviews of school jurisdiction education plans and follow-up dialogue between school jurisdiction and Alberta Learning personnel.

Recommendation

1. Refer this report to Field Services with the direction it be reviewed with school superintendents or their designates during the fall 2003 field visits to review the 2003-06 education plans.
2. Share this report with the Accountability Enhancement Team of Alberta Learning with the direction this body consider implications of the report for future accountability directions for each affected Division in Alberta Learning.